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NEA/ELA FOR MATTHEW IRWIN

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SUBJECT: SPANISH OPTIMISTIC ABOUT SYRIA BORDER PLAN, NOTE
U.S. CONCERNS

REF: A. STATE 128335
[1](#)B. STATE 125650
[1](#)C. MADRID 1499

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Spanish DG for the Mideast, Mediterranean and Africa Alvaro Iranzo told DCM September 13 that Spain had received generally positive EU feedback to its non-paper on a Syrian border force, noting that certain EU members, including the French, had expressed a desire to wait until after the Lebanese elections to pursue such a force. Iranzo said the initiative was a product of FM Moratinos' travel to Syria and Lebanon in early August, in which he received a favorable response from Syria on increased EU involvement. Spain thinks the EU should do everything possible to make an ambitious and comprehensive proposal to the SARG, essentially calling its bluff. Iranzo said that the SARG was open to EU technical assistance and monitoring, and he noted that such a long border could not be controlled without it. Iranzo said that the SARG had made "positive signals" about establishing diplomatic relations with Lebanon, defining the border, and resolving the Shebaa Farms dispute. The DCM emphasized USG support for the mission in principal, but underscored that such a mission must not be a reward to Syria for violating UNSCR's and meddling in Lebanon. On the elections, Iranzo said that Spain supports the goal of a national unity government that avoids constitutional pitfalls. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) The DCM met with Alvaro Iranzo, Director General for the Mideast, Mediterranean and Africa on September 13 to discuss Spain's proposed EU monitoring mission on the Syria-Lebanon border (ref tel). The DCM emphasized USG support for the mission in principal, but underscored that such a mission must not be a reward to Syria for violating UNSCR's and meddling in Lebanon. The DCM also cautioned that such an initiative should not serve as a distraction from the essential electoral processes ongoing in Lebanon (ref B).

[1](#)3. (C) Iranzo replied that the GOS was in complete agreement regarding the elections in Lebanon and on the need for stability, with a consensus "unity government" that would eliminate the need for conflicting and/or dubious constitutional interpretations. He said this was the message Moratinos brought to Lebanon during his visit in early August (ref C).

[1](#)4. (C) According to Iranzo, Spain's Gymnich proposal for an

EU monitoring mission sprung from Moratinos' discussions in Syria in August, in which Moratinos had pressed the SARG to do more in controlling its borders, with respect not only to Lebanon but also Iraq and Palestine. Iranzo said that the SARG had made "positive signals" with regards to Shebaa farms and their willingness to facilitate the neutralization of the issue if Israel would go along, thus eliminating one of Hizballah's chief grievances. The SARG also responded positively about establishing diplomatic relations with Lebanon and permanently defining the border. When the SARG expressed openness to an EU presence and technical assistance along the border, Iranzo said Moratinos determined that the EU should call the bluff by putting together an ambitious, comprehensive plan. Iranzo noted that technical assistance might be considered a reward to the SARG, but the chance to define and control the border was a worthwhile opportunity for Lebanon, the EU and the U.S. as well. EU engagement with Syria could also help to break some of the ties between Syria and Iran.

15. (C) The DCM pressed Iranzo on how the proposal was received by EU partners, and Iranzo replied that there was unanimous recognition of the usefulness of the objective, although certain members, including the French, had privately expressed concern that the timing was not right for such an initiative so close to the Lebanese elections. Iranzo dismissed this by saying that the process would not move forward in time to impact the elections; he said the idea was like a snowball rolled down a hill that could eventually grow into a real mission.

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